



# The Silver Star

Newsletter of the Silver State National Peace Officers Museum

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www.PeaceOfficersMuseum.org

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### Special Dates of Interest:

- May 5th—Nevada LE Memorial ceremonies in Carson City.
- May 5th—Museum's Survivor Reception by invitation only.
- May 6th—Hoff Memorial ceremonies in Reno.
- May 14th—Collector and vehicle show with parade in Virginia City
- July 15-17 in Ontario, CA.—National Police Collector Show

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## Battle at Kelley Creek - Nevada State Police—1911 *By Frank Adams*

On February 26, 1911, a desperate battle raged between a posse of the Nevada State Police and a nomadic band of Indians lead by a chief later known as "Shoshone Mike". This battle was the result of an attempt to capture members of the band wanted for the murder of four stockmen. The hunt started in Little High Rock Canyon of the Black Rock Desert on February 13, 1911 and progressed for several weeks on horseback across northern Nevada. In the spring of 1910, a small band of Bannock Indians lead by an Indian known as "Mike" left the camp at Rock Creek, Idaho and headed south toward the Nevada desert. For the next several months they wandered westward as far as

Oroville, California. After a short stay there, they headed east again, choosing to winter in the Little High Rock Canyon. It was here that "Mike" decided to augment their scant winter stores with some local cattle.

Unfortunately, they were discovered by one of the local shepherders, Bert Indiano. When word of the slaughtered cattle got back to Surprise Valley, California, Harry Cambron, Peter Erramouspe, and John Laxague traveled to Camp Denio to join Bert Indiano. They left there headed for the area where the butchered stock had been



Washoe County Sheriff Ferrel with survivors of the battle on the steps of the Sheriff's Office in Reno.

found. After not being heard from for several weeks, a rescue party was sent out from Eagleville, California to search for the stockmen. On February 8, 1911, the bodies of the missing men were found in the bottom of Little High Rock Canyon.

*(continued on page 2)*

## Brothers—The Tragic Story of Las Vegas Police Officer Ernie May *by Doug Gist*

The history of Nevada's mining boom dates to Civil War days but Las Vegas bloomed much later. The city stretched for only a few short blocks in the 1930s yet today the metropolitan Las Vegas valley boasts millions of residents.

As I began to research facts for this story, I had the good for-

tune of discovering that Ernie May's daughter, Marjorie, was still living in Utah at the age of 87. She was only nine years old when her father's life was cut short by a crazed man with a gun but her pride and recollection of facts is strong. When I questioned several variations in published stories, she said "forget all of the other crap as

this is what really happened."

A young Ernie May left Utah for Las Vegas in 1905, travelling with the rest of his family following the death of his father, a miner by trade. They lived in a home constructed from railroad ties, a design meant to help

*(continued on page 2)*

## Battle at Kelley Creek—1911



Washoe County Sheriff Charles Ferrel while serving as a Reno Police officer.

They had been brutally murdered; a mustache was cut off one body; the eyelid of another was missing, as were the gold tooth fillings of the men. Since the location of the crime was in Washoe County, Nevada jurisdiction, the Sheriff from Reno was notified along with the county coroner and physician. Sheriff Charles Ferrel requested Nevada Governor Oddie to dispatch State Police officers to assist him. Captain J.P. Donnelly and three State Police officers arrived in Alturus, California on a special train to take charge of the inves-

tigation. On February 13, 1911, a coroner's inquest was held at the crime scene. A State Police posse was formed and set out to locate the band of nomads that were thought to be responsible for the murders. So started the chase across the frozen lands of northern Nevada during one of the worst winters on record. Thirteen days later and approximately 200 miles east of the site where the bodies were found, the posse caught up with the band of twelve nomads. In an area northeast of Winnemucca known as Kelly Creek, a

battle between the posse and the nomads ensued in the early morning hours of February 26, 1911. At the end of the fight, eight of the fugitives, including women and children, were dead: one posse member, Ed Hogle, was fatally wounded and four of the band were taken prisoner. The four captives included one adult female and three small children. After the coroner's inquest at the scene of the battle, the eight bodies of "Mike's" band were all buried in a common grave dug out of the frozen earth by dynamite.

## Brothers—The Tragic Story of LVPD Officer Ernie May

*“Forget all the crap; this is what really happened”*

Ernest May while employed as a United States Ranger at Boulder Dam .



make the desert heat somewhat tolerable. Ernie worked for the railroad as a teen to help support his family but developed a fascination with law enforcement at a young age. At only 14 years of age, Ernie would complete his day with the railroad and then shadow his brother, Joe, on the beat as he patrolled the downtown of Las Vegas. Joe was twelve years Ernie's senior and worked as the night officer.

Ernie joined the half dozen officers of the LVPD in 1929. He had accomplished his dream of becoming a cop!

Ernie first experienced the dangers of the job on February 29, 1929 when he was shot in the arm while apprehending four burglars. His young bride Mammie encouraged him to find a safer job so he applied for and was appointed a United States Ranger at the Boulder Dam project. He was assigned the night shift and this was far from what he imagined doing for a living.

That assignment was short lived as Ernie had not lost his burning drive to be a street cop so after only a short time he returned to LVPD. He patrolled the streets in his own Buick, no radio and no uniform as the city had not grown to that level. Officers instead were notified of their calls for service by a red light in the downtown core and when it flashed, they were to call the station for assignment, just as done in Reno and many other small cities across the country. Ernie was issued a badge, number 12, as shown in this publication.

Clark's Tourist Court was a motel on 5th Street near Charleston. Described as a seedy little place, it was said to not only include rooms for the tourists but also bootlegging and prostitution went on there.

Clark, the owner, had been drinking for three straight days when a disturbance broke out between him and others. A call was placed to the police department around 7:00 pm on June

3, 1933, and Officer Ernest May was sent to calm the situation.

When May arrived on scene, he was met by gunfire from Clark from nearby. May was shot but returned fire. Clark was said to have walked up to May and finished him off before turning the gun on himself. Witnesses and evidence was said to have proven this scenario. His daughter Marjorie insists on this!

Ernie's big brother, Joe, responded to the Tourist Court to check on things when Ernie was not heard from. When he arrived, he discovered the horror of his little brother dead in a pool of blood, and the suspect nearby also dead from a gunshot wound.

Every business in town closed for May's funeral services. A plaque was placed inside the city hall in honor of Officer Ernest May. But these were the days when there was no pension for surviving family, no Federal monies as a result of

*(continued on page 3)*

## Battle at Kelley Creek—1911

A reward had been offered for the capture of the suspects and all the members of the posse expected to share in the bounty. However, since it was a State Police Posse that caught the fugitives the Governor refused to pay the rewards. It was years before the case was settled in the Supreme Court in favor of the posse members.

*Frank Adams retired from the Nevada Department of Public Safety at the rank of Deputy Chief and currently serves as the Executive Director of the Nevada Sheriffs and Chiefs Association. He is on the board of directors for the Nevada Law Enforcement Officers Memorial, the James D. Hoff Peace Offic-*

*ers Memorial, and the Silver State National Peace Officers Museum. Frank has researched the history of the Nevada State Police for many years.*

*Sources: Mack, Effie Mona The Indian Massacre of 1911, Sparks: Western Printing and Publishing Company, 1968. Hyde, Doyle The Last Free Man, New York: The Dial Press 1973 The Humboldt Star, February 28, 1911 Carson City News, February 28, 1911 Nevada State Police Report to the Legislature 1911-1913 Smith v. State, Nevada Supreme Court, 38th Nevada, July 1915*

Nevada State Police, ca. 1920



## Comstock Police Collectors and Restored Emergency Vehicle Show

The Comstock Police Collectors Show will take place inside the Virginia City Middle School gymnasium on Saturday, May 14th from 9 am to 4 pm. Collectors from several states are expected to share their historical collections there. Tables are \$25 while walk in traffic is \$5 which also provides for admission to the museum. See our website for further information on the event.

The Comstock Restored Emergency Vehicle Show will take place at the same time but will be located outside of the museum between the courthouse and Piper’s Opera House. Vintage police vehicles as well as fire apparatus will be on display. These vehicles will also participate in the Police Memorial Week Parade through downtown Virginia City at high noon.

Last years events brought collectors from as far as New York and a car from the State of Washington. This year, participating law enforcement agencies will include California agencies such as the Mono County Sheriff’s Office and South Lake Tahoe Police Department. Don’t miss the opportunity to attend or even participate in the only law enforcement parade in the west that we know of, right here in Virginia City.

*“Last years events brought collectors from as far away as New York”*

## Brothers—The Tragic Story of LVPD Officer Ernie May

losing a life in the line of duty, and to top it all off, it all happened during the Great Depression. It was extremely difficult for the family to survive so by September of 1933, only months after Ernie’s death, the family packed up and moved back to Utah.

Joe stayed and continued serving the citizens of Las Vegas. According to the Nevada State Journal of January 19, 1935, Joe struck gold in the Sheep

Mountain District.

Today the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department boasts thousands of officers. Although Ernie May has the dark distinction of being the first LVPD officer killed in the line of duty, too many others have followed that



Ernest May’s badge

path in service to their community.

Today, Ernest May Elementary School is named after the officer and his name is listed with other officers killed in the line of duty on memorials in Carson City, Reno, and Las Vegas as well as in our nation’s capital. His name and the story of his sacrifice is also honored in the museum here in Virginia City.

*Sources: Reno Evening Gazette, the Nevadan 1974, Clark County Schools website, Marjorie Waggoner*



Ernie’s brother Joe stands in his new uniform while serving with the LVPD.

## Nevada Survivor's Reception

The museum will host a Nevada Survivor's Reception on the evening of Thursday, May 5th in honor of those family members surviving officers who have died in the line of duty in Nevada.

The evening will include food, entertainment by professional singer Sandy Selby, and good company with a few extra activities and surprises. Bruce and Linda Larson and Botcha-Caloops of Virginia City are preparing a very special gift for each family.

We will offer each family the opportunity to create a "living history" digital audio recording that will tell the story of their loved one to others when included with their officer's page in our memorial computer ki-

ask. Many of our visitors are not in any way involved with the law enforcement profession so in the spirit of providing an educational experience, learning more about the officers, their sacrifices, and the impact upon their family is just that much more important to our mission.

As one might imagine, locating surviving family of 114 officers spanning more than 150 years time was a task. We are pleased to have located several family members of officers and they are pleased to have the opportunity to attend this special gathering.

Washoe County Deputy Sheriff Harry Swaney was just this year discovered to have been killed in the line of duty in 1935. We welcome his surviving family to

the museum following his name being added to the Nevada Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

There have been many surviving family of our officers that we have not been able to locate. Please help us reach out to them by telling those survivors you might know to contact us or by providing contact information so that we can invite them to this special evening.



Washoe County Deputy Sheriff Harry Swaney will be added to local memorials this May.

## Police Memorial Week Parade

The Police Memorial Week Parade will take place at noon on Saturday, May 14th in Virginia City, Nevada. This is to our belief the only dedicated law enforcement parade in the west and what better place to hold it but in Virginia City in honor of officers who have died in the line of duty as well as those who continue to serve their communities.

Participants will include several restored and vintage police and fire vehicles as well as representatives of law enforcement agencies from around the area to include motors, mounted officers, honor guards, in-service and specialty vehicles.

All agencies are invited and encouraged to participate. What an opportunity to show your pride in the law enforce-

ment profession by participating. See our website or call us for further information. See you there.

This event is held in conjunction with our collectors and restored vehicle show.



*"What a great way to show your pride in the law enforcement profession"*

## Thank You to Our Supporters

We would like to extend a warm thank you to the **Reno Bighorns** basketball team and organization for allowing us to hold a fundraiser game this past winter. We would also like to thank our volunteers as well as the **Washoe County Sheriff's Office** and the **Reno Police Department** for their participation, and all of the law enforcement agencies that supported the event by purchasing tickets and attending the game. A special thank

you goes out to singer **Sandy Selby** for her presentation of A Call To courage and **Storey County Sheriff's Office Deputy Shawn Mahan** for his presentation of the National Anthem. It was a great success for our museum as well as the Nevada Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

We must also recognize the **Home Depot** and **Western Nevada Supply** for their generous

donation of fixtures during our recent restroom remodel.

In addition, we have recently completed a vast improvement to our interior lighting, the Visiting Officers Board has been expanded, and many other improvements have been completed for our 2011 season. Again, our volunteers make it all possible and fun.

## Membership

Thank you also to our newest member, Edward Dixon. Support through membership is very important to our continued operation and ability to present a quality experience for our visitors. Please become a member today.



*The Silver State National Peace Officers Museum is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and sharing of the rich history of law enforcement in America. Founded in 2007 and opening in 2009, we are located in the historic 1876 Storey County Jail within the courthouse at 26 South B Street in Virginia City, Nevada.*

*Silver State National Peace Officers Museum*

*26 South B Street, Virginia City, Nevada*

*PO Box 17051, Reno, NV. 89511*

*Museum: 775.847.7800*

*Director: 775.846.5948*

*E-mail: [info@PeaceOfficersMuseum.org](mailto:info@PeaceOfficersMuseum.org)*

*Open daily from 11 to 5 from May 1st through October 31st*

## IN THEIR HONOR

[www.PeaceOfficersMuseum.org](http://www.PeaceOfficersMuseum.org)

## Audio Tour System

As our visitors have noticed, the museum maintains a spectacular collection for exhibit. There is so much more to show our guests but space is limited. So many of our exhibits have a story to be told, however delivering that story in print is difficult with limited space.

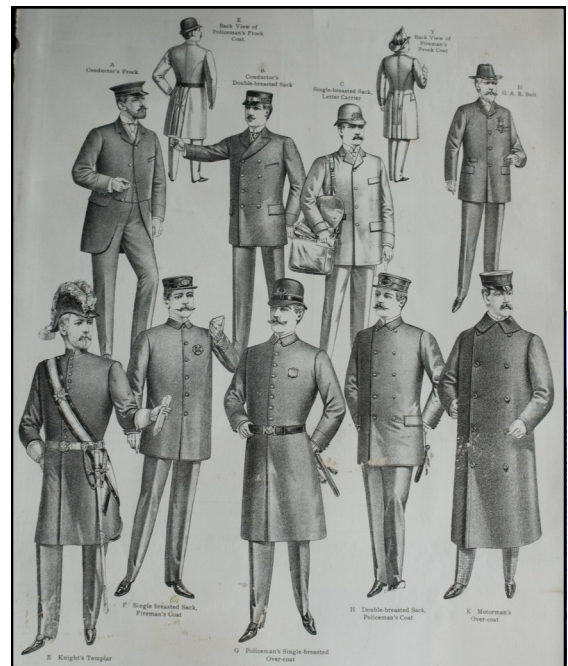
We are currently working on the perfect solution which will be an audio tour system. The selected system will provide our guests with a narrated tour throughout the museum complete with detailed information regarding our exhibit material and our facilities.

We are still seeking sponsors for the purchase of this \$3000 system. Credit will be given to

any supporting organizations at the beginning and end of the audio tour as well as on our website and within the museum. We encourage any organizations interested in supporting us through this project to contact us right away. We will be opening for the season soon and it is our goal to purchase and place this system into operation.

### Advertising

Would you be interested in advertising in our newsletter? This publication reaches thousands of readers and circulation continues to grow. Placing an ad with us supports the museum and draws attention to your business.



The best dressed officer!

# Silver State National Peace Officers Museum

*In World Famous*



*Virginia City, Nevada*

*Presents the Second Annual  
Comstock Police Collectors and Restored Emergency Vehicle Show  
in conjunction with the Police Memorial Week Parade*

## *Saturday, May 14th, 2011*

*Collector Show open 9 to 4 at the Virginia City Middle School Gymnasium  
Restored Vehicle Show open 9 to 4 at the Silver State National Peace Officers Museum  
Parade starts at 12:00 noon and runs through downtown Virginia City on C Street!*

### **TABLE AND VEHICLE REGISTRATION**

*Name:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Phone:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Address:* \_\_\_\_\_ *E-Mail:* \_\_\_\_\_

*# of 8' tables at \$25 ea.\** \_\_\_\_\_ *Table partner:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Vehicle at \$25 ea.\* Year:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Make:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Model:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Agency represented:* \_\_\_\_\_ *original / replica*

*Additional details:* \_\_\_\_\_

**ENCLOSED TOTAL REGISTRATION:** \_\_\_\_\_

\*Registration fee is waived for agency owned vehicles.

\*Museum members receive a \$5 table and vehicle discount.

\*Registration includes admission to the Friday evening social gathering in the museum.

Make checks payable to Silver State National Peace Officers Museum and mail to PO Box 17051, Reno, NV. 89511.